NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

An interview between W. G. Campbell, Chief, Food and Drug Administration, and Morse Salisbury, Associate Director of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, broadcast Thursday, June 22, 1939, in the Department period of the National Farm and Home program by a network of 101 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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JOHN BAKER:

Today Morse Salisbury, Acting Director of Information for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, has with him Mr. W. G. Campbell, Chief of the Federal Food and Drug Administration, who will report on some accomplishments of the Administration during the past year. We'll hear first from Mr. Salisbury.

MORSE SALISBURY:

About a year ago, Mr. Campbell told this audience what the new Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act provides in the way of added protection for the public health -- and pocketbook. Exactly a year ago this coming Sunday, the President signed the new measure. I believe our Farm and Home friends will want to know what the Department of Agriculture -- particularly, Mr. Campbell what the Food and Drug Administration, has done with the new law these past twelve months.

W. G. CAMPBELL:

Mr. Salisbury, I'm glad to have this opportunity to talk about the new law. It is evident that Congress, in passing the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, was deeply conscious of the need for much greater public health protection. The public health provisions of the old law of 1906 were retained, but Congress went much further. The new Act outlaws dangerous cosmetics, dangerous contraptions, and drugs which may be dangerous under the prescribed conditions of use.

SALISBURY:

The provision relating to new drugs -- That's a direct result of the "elixir of sulfanilamide" tragedy, of 1937.

CAMPBELL:

Yes, it is. That drug, which killed 107 people, is directly responsible for the requirement that no new drug shall be introduced in interstate commerce, unless application has been filed with the Secretary of Agriculture establishing that the drug is safe, under the prescribed conditions of use. The "elixir" case convinced Congress of the necessity for a new law. So important did Congress consider the public health features of the new law that it made them effective instantly -- on the 25th of June, last year. And the Food and Drug Administration considered that its first obligation was to proceed immediately against dangerous drugs, dangerous devices, and

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dangerous cosmetics -- none of which had been subject to adequate control under the old law.

SALISBURY:

Mr. Campbell, before you tell us what the Food and Drug Administration has done under the public health features, won't you tell us about some of the other features -- for instance, the provisions requiring more informative labels.

CAMPBELL:

I'll be glad to. Congress appreciated the fact that consumers are entitled to far more information than ever before, about the foods and medicines they buy. It inserted in the Act specific directions about certain facts which must be shown on the labels of foods, drugs, and cosmetics. The Act gives the Secretary of Agriculture authority of a very sweeping kind -- to set up definitions and standards for foods that will have the force and effect of law. Also, the Act authorizes the Secretary to set up various regulations, telling the manufacturer exactly what is required. Congress allowed one year for manufacturers to revise their labels, and for the Department to formulate the most essential regulations. The law, except for the public health features that became effective immediately, was to become fully effective on the 25th of this month.

SALISBURY:

In the past few days, I believe, Congress passed an amendment, postponing some of the regulations until January 1, 1940.

CAMPBELL:

Yes, the Amendment postpones some of the new labeling provisions, and also the requirement that only U. S. Certified colors be used in foods, drugs, and cosmetics.

SALISBURY:

Now, Mr. Campbell, let's go back to the public health sections of the law. What have you done about poisonous eyelash dyes, for example.

CAMPBELL:

Within three weeks after the passage of the law, last June, we located shipments, collected and analyzed samples, and started action against the types of poisonous eyelash dyes that caused so many cases of blindness. The Government made seizures of these dyes, and the manufacturers were criminally prosecuted.

SALISBURY:

What have you done about dangerous "slenderizers" --- so-called slimming compounds? You couldn't proceed against these preparations under the old law because they were neither food nor drug.

CAMPBELL:

That is true. The the new law reaches dangerous slimming compounds. Also, the new law controls products like skim bleaches containing poisonous ammoniated mercury in amounts sufficient to make them dangerous. Steps have

been taken to remove products of both kinds from the market. Another class of products on which immediate action was taken are drugs of the pain-killer type, containing such dangerous ingredients as amidopyrine and cinchophen.

SALISBURY:

A few years ago, weren't amidopyrine and cinchophen regarded as relatively harmless?

CAMPBELL:

They were, but medical men discovered that these drugs are highly dangerous. Under the new law, we have already seized a great many remedies containing such dangerous drugs, intended for self-medication. Now you understand, Mr. Salisbury, that many dangerous drugs are of great value, when scientifically administered. What we have done is to take the steps provided by the new law to control traffic in these products in such a way that the public will be protected. The public, by reading labels, can find out whether a drug is dangerous, and will be guarded against using it without medical supervision.

SALISBURY:

Yes, I understand that. Sulfanilamide, particularly, is one of the important new drugs -- but it must be administered by a physician. By the way, since the new Act was passed, have you received many applications for permission to distribute new drugs?

CAMPBELL:

Up to this morning, we have received 1,222 applications.

SALISBURY:

I suppose there's a considerable amount of work connected with approving a new drug.

CAMPBELL:

You're right about that. One important new drug, submitted to us a few weeks ago, involved a comprehensive review of more than 2,000 case records, reporting the experiences of 100 physicians.

SALISBURY:

Any drug that passes an examination like that ought to be pretty safe for the "ailing public."

CAMPBELL:

It will be safe -- before we approve its use. You can depend on that.

SALISBURY:

In addition to enforcing the public health provisions that became effective immediately, I know your Administration has been literally burning the midnight oil, getting ready for the time when the law becomes completely effective. Will you tell us about these preparations?

CAMPBELL:
I'll give you a brief catalogue of what's been done. In the first place, almost on the day the law was approved, we began to receive mail from manufacturers of foods, drugs, and cosmetics, who were working sincerely and earnestly to get their products and their labels into compliance with the law.

SALISBURY:
From what I've observed, some manufacturers didn't write -- they came to visit you, in person.

CAMPBELL:
Yes, they practically stood in line, on our doorstep -- waiting to discuss their problems in person. In preparation for full enforcement of the new law, it has been necessary to formulate and publish innumerable types of regulations. Many of these have called for detailed and time-consuming public hearings.

SALISBURY:
What about setting up official food standards that will have the "force and effect" of law. Isn't that a somewhat laborious procedure?

CAMPBELL:
It is -- decidedly. To date, we have held hearings on tomato products, egg products, dairy products, and a long list of canned fruits and vegetables. Legal definitions and standards for foods will undoubtedly simplify our enforcement problem, and give greater assurance to the consumer that when he buys a good product, tomato catsup, for example, he will get just that. Incidentally, these standards will serve as a guide to the honest manufacturer, and will protect him against the unfair competition of adulterated food products.

SALISBURY:
As I see it, the philosophy of Congress in enacting the new law appears to have been quite definitely to protect the public health at every stage in the traffic in drugs, in foods, and in cosmetics; to guarantee comprehensive information to the consuming public as to the character and composition of foods and drugs, to protect the public against deception, and to impose adequate penalties for violations.

CAMPBELL:
You are quite correct, Mr. Salisbury.

SALISBURY:
Thank you very much, Mr. Campbell, for coming up here to tell us about the work of your Administration under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938. We hope you'll come again.

JOHN BAKER:
Farm and Home friends, you have heard Mr. W. G. Campbell, Chief of the Federal Food and Drug Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Morse Salisbury, Associate Director of Information.